Abstract

During 2000/01 we reviewed the current practices of each Australian terrestrial protected-area agency in regard to visitor and user fees, tour and activity permits, risk and asset management and visitor monitoring and education programmes. Current practices differ widely between, and in some cases also within, individual State, Territory and Commonwealth protected-area agencies. Most require commercial tour operators to be licensed, and most charge licence application and annual fees. Most parks also charge visitor entrance and camping fees, whether visitors arrive independently or with commercial tours. Tour operators may receive discounts. There are concessions for children, seniors, community groups and local residents, and season passes as well as daily entrance fees. Most States and Territories charge different camping fees, depending on infrastructure and facilities and sometimes also on season and demand. Different parks charge fees either per person, per vehicle, per site or various combinations of these. Proportions of fees retained at individual parks, in individual regions, within the overall parks agency, or within the state government treasury differ between states, as do the budget procedures, which may offset any fees collected. Fees are relatively low and unlikely to influence behaviour for most tourists. Overall, fees contribute a small but still significant proportion of total parks operating funds. All States and Territories have risk- and asset-management systems in place, but these differ considerably in sophistication, integration and practical application. Recent changeovers by many State governments from cash-flow to accrual accounting systems have introduced a number of practical problems in park The introduction of the Commonwealth Government's Goods and Services Tax (GST) also forced parks agencies to review fees and revise feecollection mechanisms.